

The verses for our meditation this morning were some of Jean's favorites. They're Jesus' words to his disciples in John 14. And I think today we can relate to what the disciples were feeling when Jesus spoke them.

Their hearts were troubled. It was the night before Jesus died, and he just got done telling them that he'd only be with them a little while longer. That soon he was leaving, and where he was going, they couldn't follow yet. And it left their hearts troubled. Saddened and scared by the thought of not seeing Jesus again.

But I think we can relate to their troubled hearts today. After all, Jean isn't with us anymore. She's left us, and where she's gone, we can't follow quite yet. Like the disciples, we are saddened that for a while we won't see the mother, grandmother, friend we love. Maybe even with them we're a bit scared: After all, when someone we love dies, it reminds us the same will one day happen to us.

Their hearts were troubled, and so are ours. But like them, we have a Savior who loves us too much to leave us like that. A Savior who invites us to find in him comfort for our troubled hearts today. Jesus says to us: **Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.**

The disciples' hearts were troubled...but Jesus says to them disciples that the very thing that was troubling them was really cause for rejoicing. Yes, Jesus was leaving – he'd die on the cross, rise from the grave, and 40 days later, ascend into heaven. But it was all for them! It wasn't to be rid of them, but so that he could be with them forever. It was to prepare for them a place with him in his Father's house.

And they needed Jesus to do that. We needed Jesus to do that. Because by nature we don't have a place in God's house. Sinners don't belong in the presence of the Holy God. Jesus himself put it this way earlier in John's gospel: "Anyone who sins" – and that's everyone – "is a slave to sin," and "a slave has no permanent place in the household." No amount of preparation on our part – of doing, praying, obeying – could ever earn us one or take away a single sin. Instead, by our sin we earned a place apart from God, in this life and forever in hell when we die.

But preparing a place *for* us is precisely why Jesus came into this world. God's Son became man, our brother, to win us a permanent place in God's house. And the day after he spoke these words to his troubled disciples, at the price of his own life, that's what Jesus did. On the cross, he suffered the hell that your sins and Jean's and mine deserved and took them all away. The Father abandoned his Son with our sins so that he could receive us as his forgiven and dearly loved children. So we could have a place in his house, now and forever. Proof it worked? Jesus rose on day three, guaranteeing it's so.

Friends, because of Christ, what troubles our hearts today is really cause for rejoicing, too. Jesus' life and death earned Jean a permanent place in God's house. The risen and

ascended Jesus made it hers when he sent the Spirit into her heart at her baptism, washing her sins away, making her God's child. He shepherded her every day after through his Word, so that as she died she knew the way to where Jesus has gone: Jesus himself. Through Jesus, this last Wednesday night, the Father welcomed her into her heavenly home. She traded her room at Holly Hall for her glorious room in the Father's mansion. There she knows perfect joy...and that means we can rejoice with her today.

And we can look forward to rejoicing with her there, too. After all, Jesus' life and death have won you a place in the Father's house, as well. And you know the way to that place where Jean is, where Jesus is: Jesus himself. Trust in Him, and your death need not trouble you either. Rather, it's cause for rejoicing: It's the day you'll trade your temporary residence here for the permanent joys of heaven.

Today, we commit Jean's body to the ground, confident her soul is already in heaven. And we look forward to the day Jesus will make good on his promise: **I will come back to take you with me.** He will return...raise Jean and all the dead...and welcome her and all believers, body and soul, into our eternal home. May this truth comfort your troubled hearts today and always. Amen.

